1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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members of the household, we are forced to postulate the sacred and semireligious nature of the attitudes surrounding the old couple and identifying them with the forces of the dead and the symbolic unity of the family, past and present.

The match is a mechanism, from one point of view, for preservation of family unity through the sequence of the generations. The dominant interest of the old couple in the "new woman" brings this point out most forcefully. They are vitally concerned in providing heirs for the line. Consequently their evaluation of the "new woman" is made upon the score of her fertility. Their desire is as strong as hers. She must have children.

The chief reflection of this fact is not to be found in economic expressions, frequent as they are. Children mean more hands for the working corporation. The farmers express their desire for them once again in terms of "help." But help might be obtained in other ways, for it can be hired. Rather it is the continuity of the human nexus which is the true goal. The fact that much of the relationship between the old couple and the "new woman" is built around her childbearing illustrates where the motivating interest lies.

The old couple appraise their daughter-in-law accordingly. The first year of the girl's new position is a time of apprenticeship. Work is light. Pregnancy is her major duty. All during her childbearing years the old woman aids her and helps her, praising her in terms of her increase and showing as great an interest in the arriving children as the mother. One countryman puts it as follows:

> This [a smooth relationship between the old couple and the new woman] carries on for seven or eight months, but, if then the old people do not see evidence of increase of young, then the boy's father's people get angry and abuse her, but if they do, they do not let her do any work and are so proud.

Family andcommunity alike support them in their attitude. A woman could say bitterly, for she was childless: 183 842

No matter how much money you have and how good-looking you are, if you don't have children, you're no good. But if you're ugly as the wort and have children you are all right.

The husband has every right to express his displeasure at his wife's barrenness. To have no children is a source of shame to him nd a terrible disappointment in his desire to continue his line upon the farm. One woman put it: 183 593 842

The man wats children because he is afraid others will tell him he is no god if he hasn't any. Children are the curse of the country, especially if you haven't any.

In the country districts they say that he may beat her and in their graphic phrase "bounce a boot off her now and then for it." Country belief still regards the woman as the offending partner in a childless marriage. Near Inagh one farmer, a returned Yankee, was regarded as an anomaly because, though childless, he treated his wife just as well as though she had many and did not get angry when he was twitted on his lack of an heir. They explained it by saying that he "knew it was his own fault." [195]

The day of the "country divorce," as the farmers call it, is rapidly passing. In the old days, they say, a man might send a barren wife back to her parents, though Catholic law forbade him to marry again. There are cases which illustrate that the custom survives in altered form. They are particularly revealing in our analysis of the desire to preserve the family unity and its identification with farm and household through the generations. Here the brothers act, sociologically, as a single individual in order to insure the desired continuity. For instance, in one case, a middling farmer of Corrofin, childless after several years, got a country divorce. He gave the land thereafter to his brother in return for a thousand pounds, which the brother had inherited in lieu 586 842

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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of the farm on the stipulation that his brother should marry. The brother thus got wife, dowry, and farm; and the identity of land and family was preserved for a new generation.

Time and time again that continuity of identification lies at the root of the behavior which follows upon the transference of control within a family.

Particularly in the case of the incomplete farm families, a wide variety of arrangements appear to effect the same transition without going beyond the group. As the following generality explains, it is only the "crabbit" farmer who breaks through the circle of reciprocal obligation:

> If there is no heir to hold the land, they [the childless couple] might give it to a friend, the nearest to the husband, or the wife might give it to the nearest to her. The husband might take a boy from his brother or, if he's crabbit, he will sell it and go to town and drink the money.

But the second contingency that the wife might give the land to one of her kindred may be a source of trouble. The great emphasis upon patriliny militates against it. As the countrymen say, they "want to keep the name on the house; they are dying to have the same name on the house."

At any rate some of the matches between cousins arise, consciously or not, because of this desire. And they occur here and there in country districts, even though the full weight of the Church's authority is against them. Countrymen on occasion have explained that they are love-matches. By impregnating the girl, the boy forces the priest to allow the marriage "for cause." Soberer opinion, nevertheless, condemns such action. It is no light thing to "destroy a girl's character."

There are many more subtle ways of effecting the same end. Nieces and nephews, even grandchildren, may be brought into the house, and matches made for them. In this regard a conflict arises between legal right and social custom. The country districts recognize only vaguely the

In matchmaking, too, legal terms may be subordinated to
583 country-bred aspirations. To insist upon the full letter of
842 the contract, even if its purpose is not fulfilled, is meanness. It is a breach of social convention, even though quite within legal right. For the "writings" is a formal legal instrument nowadays. Not all the farmers have gone so far in safeguarding himself as one F— in Inagh did. "He put it in the writings that he would pay the last half when his daughter was safe delivered," so we were told. For the provisions of the match reflect again the identifying continuity and the importance to all parties of the girl's bearing children for the family into which she marries. Most often the second instalment of the fortune is not paid until the first child is born, or, with more legal formality, till a year after the marriage contract is completed. One informant summed the matter up:

583 768 If the woman dies after a year and the first part of the fortune is paid, the man doesn't usually claim the rest, although he may be mean enough to claim it. For the young man can marry again. If the man dies, the girl is given the money if there is no heir and is sent home. If there is, then she gets the place.

583 Let us reëxamine the dowry in the light of this complexity of interrelated factors. As has been explained, the fortune goes to the farm owner, in ordinary cases the father of the boy. At the match, land, house, cattle, and household effects move from father to son just as kinship relationships move and as adult status moves. One family, that of the old couple in which the son was merely one of the children, is partially destroyed in order to make way for a new one, in which the son and the incoming wife are now the adult married couple. The movement of goods corresponds to social forces. And the fortune brought in by the new wife moves from her father to the boy's as if to recompense the father for his loss of the farm. It is significant that the fortune is paid always in money. Try as we might, we never found it paid in any other way. Land, cattle, and household effects

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terms are summaries of status in farm economy, family life, and the cliques of the community.

Consequently the comment and attitude of the small farmers toward sexual behavior cannot be divorced from their appreciation of status in family and community. For them sexual behavior is merely one aspect, not of individual personality, but of sociological role. If one turns to any record of the sort of commentary and discussion the small farmers carry on among themselves, both in the semi-public discussion of the *cuaird* and in the more private talk of conversation among friends of a common age and status, one encounters a characteristic set of remarks and evaluations. These are for the most part discussions of specific persons in specific events. The attitudes expressed are directed now toward persons, now toward general conditions, now toward moral or ethical imperatives, now toward cosmological principle. Yet always, if sex is the subject, the status of the actors and the interests of the familist farm economy are the themes.

Women are valued and praised for their fecundity. All this is part of generally accepted convention among the small farmers, and such conversations as the following are not in the least unusual, despite the very great modesty and reticence of the farmers. A small farmer is praising an old woman, the head of the household, to one of the authors and contrasting her to her son's wife, both being listeners:

> Here is a woman that has no more milk of her own. They shouldn't allow a woman like that to breed because a man should always keep his wife in the milk. The old woman, God bless her, raised every child with the didi [breast].

The country-bred boy and girl grow up in an atmosphere of constant reference to sex and breeding. There seems to be little of the ignorance about such matters which the townsman delights so in attributing to country people. In Ireland, no less than elsewhere in the world, the antagonism between town and country often expresses itself in such

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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581 833 842 Thus marital and sexual success have but one criterion. One proves one's worth sexually in the marriage bed, which is in turn the childbirth bed. The proof of happy adjustment, of masculine virility, and of feminine worth is "the good long family." "Lots of women have no children," you are told, "but the men have no value in them if they don't." Both man and woman are at fault and in misfortune in childlessness. In one case of repeated miscarriages, the man might be at fault, it was said, because "he usedn't to make them [the children] right."

834 It is only with the married men and women who are still engaged in producing offspring that any kind of sexual interest, officially at least, is permitted or even deemed to exist. Among others in the rural communities the interest either does not exist at all, in the eyes of small farmers, or it exists only as an evil, but powerful force. As such it must be subjected to constant control. This is the case among the young. Among the old, if it exists at all, it is only as a survival of embers that should far better be long dead. For adults, in adult family life, sex is divested of any awesome, evil character. "God help us," said one woman in this regard, "what is natural can't be wonderful."

581 Thus one can see why it is that nearly everything the young people do seems to their elders to shape them for the goal of marriage and family headship. Much of local custom comes to have that explanation. The goal is taken for granted. It is the ambition of all the young members. Their activity either marks time until they shall be able to take their places as married family heads or it prepares them for that directly. Even the pastimes and jollities of country life in the communities the authors came to know had that keynote.

The pastimes of the young people in which the usual segregation of the sexes is bridged point toward matchmaking and country marriage.

8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
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people are a great help to the mother, because the old woman would nurse the youngsters and see they didn't fall into the fire or something of that nature. The old man would keep on at his work just as long as he was able because it was in the nature of things that he had always done so. The old woman would help in the house. If there was a squabble between the mother and the daughter, the old woman would be more likely to stand up for the daughter. She would also teach her how to do things and have more patience than the mother. The grandfather would show the boy how to do things and would have more patience than the father."

Accordingly, the chief duty of the 'new woman' is to bear children. She succeeds or fails as a supplier of new persons to the family. Only with children can the new balance complete itself and the essential social continuity be assured.

The old couple appraise their daughter-in-law upon her success in this role. The first year of the girl's marriage is a time of apprenticeship. Her work is light. Highly ceremonialized custom grants her an occasional escape back to her own people. Her major duty is pregnancy, and the old couple watch her like a hawk for signs of fertility. All during her child-bearing years the old people will help her, praising her in terms of her increase, and showing as great an interest in the arriving children as she does herself.

8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
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One countryman of North Clare put that first year into words: "At first", he said, "the boy's people make much of the new woman. They would hardly let her work at all. This carries on for seven or eight months, and if then the old people don't see evidence of increase of young, they get angry and abuse her. But if they do, they don't let her do any work at all now and are so proud."

In such a situation barrenness is a curse and a disgrace. The husband has every right to express his disappointment and his displeasure. It is a source of shame to him as well. He fails in preserving the continuity of his line upon the land.

One childless woman of Inagh in Clare knew bitterly how much both family and community support these attitudes: "No matter how much money you have," she said, "no matter how good-looking you are, if you don't have children, you are no good. But if you are ugly as the worst and have children, you are all right." Then she went on, to perpetrate an Irish bull, perhaps, but to express the matter very forcibly: "The man wants children just as much as the woman. He is afraid others will tell him he is no good if he hasn't any. Children are the curse of this country, especially if you haven't any."

Nevertheless, there are other ways of ensuring the continuity. They 'keep the name on the land' too, but they are makeshifts at best. These makeshifts transfer control of the land, as does the match.

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
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people together. Seasonal festivals celebrating the major operations of the agricultural calendar are a primary part of peasant life: thus spring and autumn were the main fair seasons. In the licence permitted at these gatherings we may detect an echo of the ritual of fertility magic designed to ensure the success of seedtime and harvest.

Sympathetic magic, already present in the minds of the cave-artists of the Old Stone Age, who painted life-like pictures of animals in the hope of good hunting, may be defined as the symbolic carrying out of certain deeds in order to promote success in another field of action. A peasant community is fully conscious of its dependence on the powers that bring rain and sunshine: these powers must be conciliated and encouraged. In the face of the untamed ocean in particular, man's superstitious regard for the menace of nature dies hard, while the survival of wakes for the dead, of the veneration of trees, wells and standing stones, of customs concerning cattle and fire, is a lasting tribute to the power of magic.

From the sociological view-point the idea of sympathetic magic has had an important consequence in the tendency, common to all peasantries, to regard child-bearing as part of the ritual necessary to bring success in cultivation. The large families of rural Ireland are one aspect of this; another is the ill-omen attached to unmarried women. Barrenness tends to be regarded as a curse and a disgrace. But the years since the famine have seen great changes in the ages of marriage—the average of 29 for Irish women is one of the highest in the world—and in the proportions between the sexes: this is a subject badly in need of investigation. Statistical and economic studies we must have, but we need also to regard man as something more than a profit-making being. Peasant society is only to a limited extent drawn into the world of money: rural debts are often merely the sign of a social obligation. It is with the maintenance and continuity of society that the peasant community is concerned: hence its importance for the future of civilisation.

While communal schemes and the manifold rights and duties of the peasant have been disturbed by landlordism and

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
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It is stated that in
Mayo a ploughman would be called in to shake a woman at a 845
difficult childbirth, presumably because it is he who prepares the ground and shakes the seed which brings new life to the fields.

Music, dancing, games and dramatic performances also 536
played their part in the seasonal gatherings, and one may 527
hazard the guess that the Irishman's passion for betting 796
derives from this source. A ritual element, as in the wake 842
games mentioned in the previous chapter, can often be detected, for example in the following account taken from the source quoted above. It describes a May game or pantomime from the Louth-Armagh border, modified survivals of which were current through most of the 19th century in the Slieve Gullion district. "On May day the figure of a female is made up, fixed upon a short pole and dressed in a fantastic manner, with flowers, ribbons, etc. This figure they call 'The May Baby.' Around it a man and woman (generally his wife) dressed also fantastically with straw, dance to the sound of a fiddle and entertain the people with indecent shows and postures, the figure at the same time being kept moving by the rustic maiden that supports it. These exhibitions cause great merriment among the assembled populace; women who have had no children also attend (some of them from a considerable distance) to see this figure and exhibition, which they imagine will promote fruitfulness in them, and cause them to have children. Money is collected, and when the actors and musician have received some remuneration the remainder is laid out in drink, and the evening passes by jovially." This magic pantomime was originally intended to secure the success of the year's crops.

Such rites and gatherings have gradually been suppressed 517
or won over by the Church; and Sunday evening is now the 526
favourite recreation time for dancing and games. Among the older games, hurley is most popular, and horse-racing has by no means lost its appeal although it has suffered like other amusements from commercial exploitation. On many a

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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175 311 361 way of life was fostered by the ease with which the humbler members of the community could compete with others in arts demanding not wealth but personal qualities, in poetry, oratory, song and physical prowess. Down to our own day the small size of the average farm has encouraged the survival of simple tools and limited the acquisition of machines. Subdivision of farms and the depressing effects of short leases and absenteeism were contributory factors. Subdivision of holdings was prohibited under an Act of 1881, but like so many other prohibited practices it did not cease.

175 602 178 The retention of many of the attributes of a peasant society is the key to the survival of the folk ways with which we are concerned in the following chapters. Even the Great Famine which marks a grim watershed in social and economic history did not entirely obliterate them, though it had such far-reaching effects that it might be regarded as the end of prehistoric times in Ireland. First in importance is the strength of blood-ties in extended family groups, still maintained even in many urban communities. During the air raids on Belfast, for example, the problem of finding billets for evacuated homeless was complicated by the refusal of large groups of related families to be separated from each other. In remote rural areas the blood-tie is a dominant force, governing economic as well as social relationships,[1] its loyalties overriding the impartial administration of justice. A relative is a 'friend', even if 'far-out'—that is, remotely connected—and friendship is a matter of blood relationship. A peasant community is concerned first and foremost with the maintenance and continuity of society: it does not judge—and cannot be judged—purely by economic standards. Immemorially peasant families have been large, and childbearing is widely regarded as part of the ritual necessary to bring success with the stock and the crops. In rural Ireland
● [842] barrenness in a wife still tends to be regarded as an unnatural and disgraceful thing, and many superstitious cures for 'the
178 sterile curse' are recorded. This is but one example of a wide-
789 spread attitude towards life, to which comparative anthropology offers many parallels. Sympathetic magic, or the performance

[1] C. M. Arensberg and S. T. Kimball, *Family and Community in Ireland* (1940), Ch. 13.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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the belief that it contained the essence of the flowers of the fields. Sprigs of rowan were stuck in the midden, placed over the door of the byre and hung on the cows' horns. Flowers were also put around the well, for it was supposed that a milk-thief could steal your summer's milk and butter by skimming the water at this time, or by dragging a rope across a field to collect the dew. Boundary streams were also potent in this connexion, and I was told in Donegal that the milk churn had to be washed on May Day in 'three landlords' waters', that is the meeting place of three properties.

Besides these family rites there were public ceremonies, the lighting of bonfires and parades of May Babies, of May Boys and the May Queen. One of the rhymes sung by May Boys in the west of Ireland runs, in translation:

> Summer! Summer! the milk of the heifers,
> And ourselves brought the summer with us,
> The yellow summer, and the white daisy,
> And ourselves brought the summer with us.[1]

The May Baby parades link the festival with the fertility of the family as well as the fields. I give an account of the ceremonies as described in Co. Louth in the early nineteenth century: 'On May Day, the figure of a female is made up, fixed upon a short pole and dressed in a fantastic manner, with flowers, ribbons, etc. This figure they call 'The May Baby' . . . Around this figure a man and woman (generally his wife) of the humble class, dressed also fantastically with straw, etc., dance to the sound of a fiddle and entertain the people with indecent shows and postures . . . These exhibitions cause great merriment among the assembled populace; women who have had no children to their husbands also attend to see this figure and performance, which they imagine will promote fruitfulness in them, and cause them to have children.'[2]

The May Day bonfires and the May Queens are now little more than children's games and excuses for begging. The burning of bones—whence the word bonfire, which in Ireland keeps its original pronunciation—and in particular of horses'

[1] Lady Wilde, *The Dublin University Magazine* (1849), 541–60.
[2] J. Donaldson, *Upper Fews in 1838*, 70.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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XX

WEDDINGS AND WAKES

582 178 731 776 THE average age of marriage among Irish countrywomen, about 28, is said to be higher than in any other country in the world: that of the men is higher still, and in addition there are many who never marry. These are among the demographic consequences of the economic and social changes which followed the Great Famine of 1845–47, for down to that time the mass of the population had nothing to lose and everything to gain by marrying young. Among the economic factors which led to the postponement of marriage may be mentioned the rising standards of living, the prohibition of the subdivision of holdings so that only one son could inherit, and the need for larger farms consequent on the decline of subsistence farming and the increase of pastoral husbandry, which meant that the peasant had to look and plan ahead. Equally important, I believe, was the effect of the crisis of the famine in breaking down patterns of behaviour which had continued with little change since prehistoric times. The elder faiths were rudely shattered so that today we have only the broken remnants left, stray survivals which have lost their meaning in a modern setting. The scattering of the fairy hosts is the constant lament of old people for whose parents they were a reality. Over large parts of the country, down to famine times the fairies (among them the ancestral spirits), and the powers of nature in sun and stone, tree, flower and welling water were ruling forces whose malice must somehow be averted, and whose beneficence must be courted by magical acts. Nature's reproductive surplus on which [842] human life depended could best be assured by breeding children to capacity.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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WEDDINGS AND WAKES

The Irish birthrate remains high, and despite delayed marriages the population would continue to increase were it not for emigration, latterly to Britain instead of America. Moreover, sterility is still regarded as a disgrace, and superstitious practices find one of their last pathetic appeals in attempts to be cured of 'the sterile curse'. Among a peasant people a childless marriage is an economic and social tragedy. There is some evidence that, in the north of Ireland at least, trial marriage or bed-fellowship (bundling), as in Wales, the Hebrides, Norway and Holland was an accepted preliminary of marriage and a means to which the fertility of a prospective partner was tested. The reliability of the notorious Richard Twiss as a witness may be impugned, but in this instance his account of the custom in Co. Fermanagh is likely to be true[1] since there are living traditions of trial marriages in Counties Antrim and Londonderry.

For the most part, these immemorial attitudes did not survive the crisis of the famine and the watchfulness of a now well-organized priesthood. The fertility rites of wakes for the dead and the unashamed courtships which were carried on at patterns and at the great seasonal festivals find a plausible explanation in the fact that they occurred at times and places where the spirits of the dead were waiting to be reborn. The gatherings at hill-top burial places attested by tradition and the legendary histories were similarly drawn together by the pull of ancestral spirits. The name Dermot and Grania's Bed which is applied to many megalithic graves gives these ancient monuments a reputation which is evident in a belief recorded by Hely Dutton in Co. Clare early in the last century: 'If a woman proves barren, a visit with her husband to Dermot and Grania's Bed certainly cures her.'[2] And the Saints' Beds associated with many ancient church sites have taken over some of the megalithic magic, for they have the power of curing of barrenness a woman who spends the night there.

If the youthful marriages of pre-famine days seem far removed from the carefully arranged matches of the present-day peasantry, it should not be concluded that they were casual and

[1] R. Twiss, *A Tour in Ireland in 1775*, 108.
[2] H. Dutton, *Clare*, 318.

14: Westropp B-4, 5 (no date)1910-12
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that they had drowned themselves, and gave up the pursuit.[14] Possibly the legend originated the association of indecency with the Clare dolmens found in 1808 by Hely Dutton.[15] A girl would not guide him to the fine one at Ballygannor until assured that he was a stranger, for, it was explained to him, a woman could refuse nothing to a man at one of these monuments. Some such reason probably lay behind the belief that, if a couple unblessed with children went to a *labba*, the defect in their household was amended. I have been told that this belief existed in Clare, but got no direct evidence of it. The Tuam an goskaigh monument in Ballynahown was believed to be the grave of a giant buried with his great sword, to recover which certain young men dug and overthrew the stones; but they found nothing, and afterwards prospered so ill that they had to emigrate.[16] Grania was supposed to be a male saint near Feakle, and the "scoop" in the west end of Tobergrania dolmen-well at Ballycroum was supposed to be the place where he put in his head to drink.[17] The long grave of Ballykelly, famed for its lovely outlook high over the woods and lake of Doon on the flank of Slieve Bernagh, was known as "Old Grania," but the term "Granny's bed" was not unknown in East Clare. I heard no legend of a "hag" at any dolmen. The alleged rites at the "Druid's Altars" at Maryfort and Carnelly have already been noted.[18] When two blocks of the latter structure were removed for use as gateposts, they returned during the night to their original site, and were never again removed. The hand of the destroyer of a dolmen near Ruan was struck by a splinter and severely injured,[19] the remains of the blocks being left where

[14] Corcomroe legend, given to me by the late Prof. Brian O'Looney.

[15] *Statistical Survey of the County of Clare*, p. 318. On the Continent indecent names and legends are also attached to dolmens; cf. Borlase, *Dolmens of Ireland*, vol. ii., p. 555; vol. iii., p. 845.

[16] Messrs. Hilary and Kelleher of Oughtdarra.

[17] So among the inhabitants in 1896-9.

[18] Vol. xxii., p. 51.

[19] Told to me by the sufferer. His predecessor, who had overthrown some blocks, was also unlucky. Cf. *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, vol. xxxv., p. 212.

[p. 257]

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

Despite sexual repression and the complaints of wives about large families, children are much desired by parents, and the fertility rate in Inis Beag is extremely high. An examination of 109 marriages between 1891 and 1960 reveals that the average number of offspring per couple is 6.4 (7.2 for marriages in which the wife has passed the menopause); this figure excludes spouses who are barren. The range in family size is between 1 and 16 offspring, and 18 of the 109 marriages have produced 7 children—the modal unit. Today, 6 couples are childless and as a result are "pitied" by their neighbors, who hold that it is the females who are sterile. At least 2 women, to my wife's knowledge, have been examined by obstetricians on the mainland and been found fecund; but they have been unable to persuade their spouses of the medical fact or get them to consult the doctors themselves. Men are anxious about their own maleness, as evidenced in the ability to produce offspring in this case, and have an eye to aid in their labors and to descent, succession, and inheritance. Women desire children, in part, to compensate for the lack of attention and affection from their mates.

Most of the enculturation during infancy and childhood in Inis Beag is done by mothers, as men are away much of the time and, if at home, "don't like to mind the kids." Mothers favor their sons, whom they "overprotect" and to whom they give "seductive" care. In the process of childrearing, sexual interest is first elicited and then blocked by punishing its behavioral manifestations. As a result of the mother's close ties to the male child, the father often is alienated from familial interaction, is hostile toward the youth, and fails to become a source of firm masculine attachment. Disliking to fulfill the responsibilities of enculturation and often in conflict with both his wife and male offspring, the father forces his mate to project herself into her role as childrearer to gain solace, and thus the cycle repeats itself. Although fathers tend to favor their daughters, their desire to "escape" the home discourages a pronounced Electra complex from arising. The bond between mother and son is so binding that it is not infrequent for marriage to be postponed after the death of the father, and the son to work the holding for his widowed mother until he has reached the age of confirmed bachelorhood. "This is also the basis for the conflict between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law that is quite intense in Ireland, the prospect of which leads so many sons to refuse 'to bring another woman in on my mother' " (Humphreys 1965:246).

Within marriage, husbands tend to relate themselves to their wives as they have to their mothers when single. The wife is the "strong" person in the household, on whom the husband is emotionally dependent even when their relationship is one of mutual withdrawal and uncooperativeness. In most households, the wife shares at least equally in decision-making, and in many the husband bows to his spouse's decisions, not only in minor matters but in affairs of utmost importance to the family and those relating to activities normally within the male sphere, such as farming. It is the wife who invariably handles the money in the household. Freudians would see the influence of the mother image in the realm of sex: the rarity of conjugal love, the lack of sexual foreplay marked by little or no concern with the female breast, the brevity of the coital act and the frequent spurning of the woman following it, the need to degrade the female in the sexual act, and the

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

been blessed, to protect the beast from milk pilfering fairies and hag witches. Among the taboos associated with May Day are those prohibiting the visiting of wells before dawn and giving away fire; as regards the latter taboo, to do so is to "give away the luck of the farm" for a year. Flowers are placed on the altars of the two medieval churches in the early morning of May Day, and at one time garlands of flowers shaped like a horseshoe were hung on door posts for luck. Souls of the dead are especially feared on Allhallows' Eve, and are placated in the Catholic tradition a day later on the feast of All Souls. The telling of stories is tabooed on Allhallows' Day, and the fairies are said to spoil wild blackberries for future eating with their before dawn depredations. My wife and I invited in a small group of islanders to celebrate Halloween in 1959, and we spent much of the evening having our fortunes told by an old man as it was done on this night when he was a youth; he poured melted lead through a key handle into a pan of cold water and made his prognostications by interpreting the configurations formed by the quick hardening metal.

Whitsuntide is the week beginning with the feast of Pentecost, or Whitsunday, but in Inis Beag it extends to the feast of Corpus Christi and is known as the "kinkish time," when once again evil forces hold sway in the island. Usually the weather is "heavy and close" and very changeable, I was told, and people tend to be irritable and more depressed than usual. Men do not cut their hair, nor does anyone wash themselves, during these 12 days. Although the pookah is always a danger, it is more active at this time than during the rest of the year, and children and visitors are warned not to fall asleep outside or even to sit down on the ground unless accompanied by others, whose presence will thwart any attempts by the demon to twist their limbs. Some islanders will not undertake major tasks or decide on important issues during Whitsuntide. Whereas Christmas and Easter are considered "lucky times," the "kinkish time" is unlucky, and those born then may have the evil eye or be destined to die violently or take a life.

In 1960, Corpus Christi was celebrated June 16th—two days after pattern day and eight days before St. John's Eve. The latter is one of several midsummer celebrations reported from Ireland which mark the summer solstice. Boys gather wood and tend a huge bonfire lighted just after sunset on the common land of Inis Beag, and a few islanders carry coals from it to their homes and fields for protection and to guarantee the fertility of their wives and female livestock. A man complained to me that an infection in his son's finger was caused by the failure of the boy to procure a coal from the fire as instructed. On that evening, the folk congregate outside of their cottages and along the terrace roads to watch the hundreds of bonfires alight on the mainland coast. In the past, cows were driven between twin bonfires as at Beltaine, and barren women and those yet to marry leaped over the dying flames. One of the most brilliant satirical novels of Irish life—both cruel and insightful—is Tracy's *The Straight and Narrow Path*, the plot of which focuses on the difficulties encountered by a vacationing British anthropologist after he writes for a newspaper an eye witness account of nuns jumping a St. John's Eve bonfire.

The legends are several and varied in Ireland about the life of St. Martin (O Suilleabhain 1957:252–261). There is no saint of this name who is of Irish